

Hello, my name is Angela Sharkey, I am an 8th grade student at Gaylord middle school. I've also been homeschooled, attended a public school in Macomb and a very diverse public school in Virginia, a school without common core. I am an officer of the student council; I'm not just here to share my thoughts of the Michigan standards and standardized testing, but those of classmates and teachers as well.

I feel as though the standards treat students as numbers that follow the same pattern, but I'm an individual with my own talents, goals and dreams, as are all the students I know. I excel in math and struggle with English, but strive to be the best "I" can be. I'm happy to report my current principle, counselors and teachers have gone out of their way to modify my coursework to my individual needs; challenging me where the standards don't. If they had more control and flexibility to recognize each student is unique, they could provide more students the best education for each of us, and that's my hope.

Students are bored when the standards are too easy for them but any effort to exceed goes unrewarded, causing them to quit trying. Teachers are concerned they don't measure worth, citizenship or effort but are afraid to voice their opinions. Academic excellence and character is forgotten. Our country is built on excellence - people chasing their dreams and achieving excellence in their fields. Students taught to achieve minimums are not prepared to enter real life where excellence is the goal. That's the real reason to change the standards - because parents send us to school to prepare us for life's challenges and we need to reach as high as we can. The standards need to encourage ALL students to care. In each kid there is a candle that glows from learning; when the candle is capped, extinguishing the light, it's extremely hard for students and teachers to relight it.

Students and teachers agree, the test takes too much time away from learning - 3 weeks. It has 2 parts, each 2-3 hours just sitting and reading text on a computer. Trying to read on the computer is difficult and makes the content really hard to comprehend. No alternative is allowed, we just have to deal with it.

In the classroom, we are told to t4 (talk to the text), mark up the text, and show your work, which is really hard and unnatural on a computerized test and leads to lower test scores. Showing our work reinforces the problem solving process; it is how we visualize and comprehend. Yes, technology is advancing and

schools should take advantage of it, but just because technology allows you to do something doesn't mean we should; we need to test like we learn.

The test is supposed to see what we know but it doesn't work, because it has no effect on our grades so kids have little to no incentive to do well - they just blow it off. You might be tempted to think these are just the under-performing students but its good ones as well. I'm a 4.0 student and for the last month I begged my parents to let me opt out of the test so I could keep learning. And I do not think my school should be punished because I wanted to learn.

The test needs to be shorter or use the regular classroom testing, and should capture above grade performance as well as below (like the ACT/SAT) to reward students, teachers and schools for beating the standard. Teaching TO the standard stresses 100% student achievement of the minimum and no more.

I appreciate you giving me time to address this topic and I hope you'll make changes that strengthen the standards and encourage academic excellence. I understand they may be too late to help me, but speaking to you today finally makes me feel like I am actually representing my peers by making sure their voice is heard.